

[Norbert Elias and the Frankfurter Traditions]

Abstract: In 1977 Norbert Elias returned to Frankfurt am Main after 43 years in exile. I was a student then, having just arrived from Denmark to study philosophy and the Frankfurt tradition. It is my thesis that this particular seminar and interpretation culture from the 30's had a decisive influence on Norbert Elias' process-oriented sociology and civilisation theory. The way in which psychoanalytical experiences were combined with sociological themes, where the categories are reflected on a background of a fundamental philosophical knowledge, is a unique civilising interplay with roots in the city of Frankfurt.

Keywords: Communication of knowledge, Transcultural communication, The Frankfurter tradition, Civilisation, Socialisation.

Norbert Elias – Back in Frankfurt am Main

In 1977 Norbert Elias returned to Frankfurt am Main after 43 years in exile. I was a student then, having just arrived from Denmark to study philosophy and the Frankfurt tradition.

Elias' lectures and colloquiums at the University combined with the informal conversations and discussions at Café Lauma were a revelation to me. The free conversation and spontaneous ideas about major and minor subjects were attached to a corpus of knowledge with a breadth and depth that was overwhelming.

What I experienced was a revival of the living dialogue which has its origin in the sociological seminar in Frankfurt in the early 30's and which turned out to become an exceptional university culture which grew out of the city's intellectual life.

It is my thesis that this particular seminar and interpretation culture from the 30's had a decisive influence on Norbert Elias' process-oriented sociology and civilisation theory. The way in which psychoanalytical experiences were combined with sociological themes, where the categories are reflected on a background of a fundamental philosophical knowledge, is a unique civilising interplay with roots in the city of Frankfurt. This interplay of experiences and knowledge was allowed to bear fruit and became a characteristic of Frankfurt in the 30's and existed until the late 80's.

The essence of my submission deals with Frankfurt's position as a particular fertile soil for knowledge and perception.

The first meeting

As a prelude I wish to tell the story about how I, by chance, hit what for me was the appropriate seminar. It was a Tuesday in the summer of 1977. The place was one of the large auditoriums on Johann Wolfgang von Goethe University. I sat there looking forward to Norbert Elias' first lecture in the summer semester. In the lecture list was announced: Norbert Elias' lectures over the theme «Civilisation theory on the background of Freud's psychoanalysis and Marx' social theory». The auditorium was already filled with people and newcomers kept entering until no place was left.

There were a variety of people of all ages: renowned professors from the University, publishers, book-sellers, fashionable older ladies (in Denmark we call them the hat-ladies), and they were all lined up on some miserable

chairs together with the students, many of whom I had previously met at other seminars. As a student in Frankfurt you do not confine yourself to the institute you are matriculated with. You buy a lecture list and pick and choose whatever you find relevant for the theme you are working on, seeking inspiration everywhere.

In my hands I held a book entitled *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation*, which had just been published as paper-back, first edition, even though the book was written in 1936, as the foreword told. The author's name was printed on the cover: Norbert Elias, born 1897 in Breslau. I wondered whether it was this Elias who was going to lecture now.

Precisely at a quarter past one an elderly gentleman, dressed in a worn-out Burberry cotton-coat, entered the auditorium. He moved around in the room with such naturalness, that it convinced me that he was lecturing here every Tuesday and had done it for years. He was simply melting together with the interior and the atmosphere in the overcrowded auditorium.

There was total silence, when Elias entered the podium, stepped over to a table where he placed his cotton-coat, took out the manuscript from his briefcase, continued to the desk, and started with the following words: «Ich bin sehr froh wieder in Frankfurt lesen zu können». There was a roar of applause towards Elias, they embraced and lifted him with an unspoken: Welcome back - we admire your achievement. Again there was silence, but the room had changed. It was all his - filled with respect. Norbert Elias was again lecturing in Frankfurt after 43 years in exile. And he continued: «Ich habe in der Zeit seit damals ein paar Bücher geschrieben unter anderen *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation*».

Elias presented his program for his lectures during the summer semester. For the first time I felt that I had found the proper seminar. The subject matter and the way it was told formed a whole; I had never experienced that before. For the first time I could identify myself with what was said.

In addition to the lectures on Tuesday afternoon, a colloquium was held on Monday evenings. This colloquium was open to everyone who was interested and wanted to participate. To my great surprise there were only about 15 persons, amongst them professors, some well-known people from the city and a little group of students. But here - for the first time in my life - I experienced the classical colloquium, as it must have been practised in the thirties.

The leader of the colloquium suggests a theme to be discussed. It is an open form of discussion, where the dialogue flows freely, and each single person is being heard irrespective of name, title or income. All views are being respected and taken seriously, no questions are regarded as stupid or banal, and all statements are treated seriously.

I was all of a sudden close to the celebrities, I had read about in Denmark and despite on my imperfect German - just as imperfect as my English is now - they all accepted me as an equal participant and listened to what I was saying. That was something quite unexpected, but the result was that I was enormously stimulated and full of energy. Elias managed to make the different viewpoints wander in a way I had never experienced before. Everyone was participating, and though it was sometimes confused, Elias always managed to gather the threads without asserting him or obstructing.

The atmosphere in the room was intense, fanciful and stimulating, though the dispute between Elias and some of the professors could sometimes be subtle, polemical and improvised, but always elegant, sharp, etching and exact. It corresponded exactly to my imagination of what a learned scholarly climate should be. I was filled with admiration and confused to see how it could be done. Looking back I can recognise the form and the spirit in Else Seglow and Gisela Freund's experiences and memories from the thirties in their description of the circumstances in «Human Figurations. Essays for / Aufsätze für Norbert Elias».

The third seminar

After the colloquiums we often went to a coffeehouse or a restaurant mostly Greek or Italian - the so-called third seminar, where we continued with more informal dialogues. Elias was interested in what we - the young ones - had to tell. We were curious and he told us about how the Institut für Sozialforschung was founded in the

thirties. About the obstinacies between Horkheimer and Mannheim, about the junior partners «Teddy» (Adorno) and Elias - and much more. The following summer it came too many discussions with Elias, with whom I had coffee at Cafe Lauma every Tuesday afternoon, before seeing him to the train. He resided in Bochum, where he lectured too.

The acquaintance with Elias became friendship and Elias told me on our many walking tours that Frankfurt previously was a very special unique city, where the university and a large part of the citizens formed a social unity, which inspired each other. What I had experienced with Elias' lecture were the reminiscences of that tradition. The fact that people from the city attended the lectures and seminars created private salons, where they discussed the cultural trends in a free unrestrained form, was new and untraditional compared to the current German academic world. It is with this background in mind you shall figure out that «Institut für Sozialforschung» was established and financed by Felix Weil, a businessman, who with means from his private fortune made it possible to establish a research institute. It meant that a large number of young scholars got a chance to assert themselves in a free space, which for instance Max Horkheimer and others were able to utilize in connection with their social scientific visions.

Here it is necessary to mention that Max Horkheimer was the first university professor in sociology and philosophy who realised the necessity of recognising psychoanalysis as a scientific discipline which had to be attached to the university.

Horkheimer worked hard, before and after the Second World War to make the Sigmund Freud Institute a place, where you practised research in the subjective structures, and discussed it in relation to a critical social theory. In the thirties before they all were driven into exile, it was besides Horkheimer especially Adorno, Eric Fromm, Franz Borkenau, Herbert Marcuse, Goldstein, S. F. Fuchs, Walter Benjamin - and of course Mannheim and Elias, who worked on integrating the psychoanalytical experiences with insight in social science and philosophical knowledge.

This caused a special treatment of the material, a form Elias, in his own outstanding way, has developed in *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation*, and apparently refined and further developed in his exile (from 1936) in England, where he practised as group-analyst.

The characteristic with the sociological tradition in Frankfurt is that it is based on the following model:

1. The knowledge of philosophy and sociology of knowledge. The philosophical seminar with the classical lectures.
2. Sociological practise. «Institut für Sozialforschung», where you did critical empirical research on societal problems.
3. Psychoanalytical experiences. The establishment of a psychoanalytic research institute, where you researched on subjective experience and socialisation on the background of specific analyses. Here the scholar's own subjectivity was involved, by urging the sociologists and social researchers to go into analysis. The purpose was to make them able to distinguish between private and unfamiliar conflicts but also to develop a greater sensibility towards the perceived material, which the sociologist comes in touch with in the research, and research process.

This is a setting of social psychological/sociological knowledge, which can be traced back to the foundation of «Institut für Sozialforschung». The keeper of the Horkheimer archive, Dr. Gunzelin Schmied Noerr, confirms this.

The setting has been taken up after the war in the circles around the leader of the Sigmund Freud Institute, Alexander Mitscherlich, the sociologist Klaus Horn and the psychoanalyst and sociologist Alfred Lorenzer.

In the circle around Lorenzer I found a comparable psychoanalytical inspired method of work as with Elias. It is a form that is bounded to a sensuous spontaneous physical approach to the material, where you try to combine sympathy and distance as a conscious part of the whole in the interpretation process.

You are both as scholar and student incorporated in a unity, which in addition to the pre-mentioned tri partition consists of 3 units.

Colloquium, seminar and the third seminar, where you gather at a cafe or a restaurant after the colloquium, which is always placed in the evening, so that colleagues and people engaged in business can participate.

This scientific figuration of interdependent people involves in this form various psychoanalytical practises.

The free speech in the colloquium, corresponding to the freely flowing attention in the psychoanalytical practice or the freely flowing dialogue in group-analysis.

In the seminar you can study theoretical models, an empirical material or a social problem, which you can work with in detail, in the same way as when you are in psychoanalysis. It is not uncommon that a short story or an article is being interpreted over two semesters. The specific is not being treated on the basis of one abstract theoretical model, but is studied intensively with the help of various theoretical models. The seminar and the joint interpretation also function as a casuistic seminar, with the participants as control group. It has to do with life and its complex social problems, which can be traced back to the original Frankfurter tradition's setting, where sociological, philosophical and psychoanalytical fields of research cohere according to this pattern. This model leads to the creation of syntheses, precisely as Elias' research, where he works with different themes and problems, which deal with social processes on several levels. It is the coherence within the life pattern, which leads to the synthesis rather than detached abstraction. Insight in the common life and social engagement is the analogous figure in interdisciplinary research and a prerequisite to individual experiences and thus combine them to a sociological overall picture, which deals with human beings.

This is experienced in the third seminar, where the personal intimate informal speech leads to an understanding of problems you cannot say in public. It is a training which will be of immense importance for the future sociologists. They are being taught to breach the gap between the adjustment of taboos, and thereby become sensitive towards all aspects of life, also in cases where you feel embarrassed.

With Elias you furthermore feel the exile, where you through him sense the changing process that flows, when you grow into another culture, where the tension between I and we is another than the national given. The life process is bound up vertically and horizontally in a dynamic figuration, where the process is the recurrent theme in the whole.

It is quite different from a situation, where the place disappears, and a discipline makes itself independent as a part of an impersonal abstract operation in the service of power and the discipline's own hierarchy.

On Norbert Elias' Nachlass

The years at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s when I lived in Frankfurt am Main came to affect my social existence greatly. My acquaintance with Norbert Elias had a crucial influence on my sociological orientation, and on the way I have since worked with social process models on several levels.

Thus it was concrete occurrences and experiences that are the basis for my continued work with Elias' career and his unfinished works in Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach am Neckar, where his extensive Nachlass are deposited.

Over the years, much has been written about how one can approach and understand Norbert Elias' epoch-making and wide-ranging production. I will here mention Johan Goudsblom's important reception-historic work, *Response to Norbert Elias's work in England, Germany, the Netherlands and France*, the book, *Sociology in the Balance*, and with Stephen Mennel, *The Norbert Elias Reader*, Stephen Mennel's *Norbert Elias An Introduction*, Herman Korte's *Über Norbert Elias* and *Norbert Elias Herausgeber*, Michael Schröter's *Erfahrungen mit Norbert Elias*. Nevertheless, there are great difficulties associated with following the organisation of the work in Norbert Elias's extensive authorship, which in many ways is surprising and innovative. As well as the actual process sociology, this is true of the draft for civilisation theories, power and figuration analyses such as *Die höfische Gesellschaft* and the studies on *The Established and the Outsiders*. A Sociological Enquiry into Community Problems; the establishment of the psychoanalytical group analysis with S. H. Foulkes; the founding of dynamic sports sociology with Eric Dunning. Later there was the socio-biography of the genius Mozart. In addition to these, he made various contribution to the sociology of knowledge and The Symbol Theory, which connects the process-oriented models that deal with the communication of knowledge as a step in the development of a sociological central theory operating on a

higher level of synthesis than traditional philosophical cognition theory. The whole should be seen in the light of Norbert Elias's fundamental theme, to pave the way for a science of humanity where empirical and theoretical knowledge are intertwined on several levels.

The present contribution should be understood as a supplement to Elias' biography and sociological works, which in my opinion is lacking in the mentioned works, but which is important if one is to learn to sense how he worked with the problem complexes and questions that he found it meaningful to deal with.

The circumstances mentioned above surrounding Elias' methods of research and communication were those he practised when he returned to Frankfurt am Main as Professor Emeritus in the summer terms of 1977 and 1978 at the age of 80. As mentioned, he lectured in 1977 on the theme: *Die Zivilisationstheorie im Lichte von Freuds Psychoanalyse und Marx Gesellschaftstheorie*, and in 1978 on the theme: *Etablierte – Außenseiter Beziehungen*. According to the traditional practice, all the lectures were accompanied by colloquiums that were held on the evening of the previous day.

From the summer of 1978, I became Elias' permanent escort when he was in Frankfurt in the following years. I visited Elias in Bochum and Bielefeld and was introduced to Johan and Maria Goudsblom, Peter Gleichmann and Herman Korte, the circle around Elias who conducted the initiation of figuration sociology in Holland and West Germany.

In the autumn of 1978 when I had plans to write my dissertation, Elias offered to help me. Since I was a historian of ideas, I had chosen a philosophical topic, «Die psychoanalytische aspekte in Schopenhauers Willenslehre», but realised quickly when we started that this was not me. Instead, my dissertation dealt with «Power and Architecture», examined on the basis of «The socialisation-political aspects in Norbert Elias sociology».

When I told Elias that I wanted to change the area of my research, his comment was: «I also find that topic better, but are you sure that it is the right decision? You should also be able to earn your living when you return to Denmark. The form of sociology I stand for will not make a breakthrough in Denmark within the next 15 to 20 years. Are you prepared to go this distance alone? Søren, it will not be without problems». I was naturally set on completing my project and at that time could not imagine that Elias' far-sighted objections would correspond with reality. When, full of conviction, I had declared to Elias that I was completely certain about my decision, he answered spontaneously: «I also believe it is the right decision, but it will not be easy».

It quickly became clear to me that Elias' process sociology was fundamentally different from the critical theory and the cultural analytical studies that characterised the Institute for Social Research. Norbert Elias civilisation theoretical draft and his sociological models were directly addressed to life-practical problem complexes, without being governed by political ideologies. He was opposed to any form of cultural philosophical relativism and universalist systems, which in his honest opinion led to abstract speculations and a static view of humanity. It was Elias conviction that philosophy, the history of ideas and other unadulterated humanities often led to occupation with concepts for the sake of the concepts. Those who exclusively cultivated the abstract ideas became - to use his own words - thinking statues who were blind to reality. Elias was himself a trained philosopher, but a number of concrete experiences from his youth led him to sociology. During one of our walks, he told me about the events that had set him on the track of *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation*.

The occurrences and experiences from the First World War and his time in business life made Elias sceptical about the capacity of philosophy to give action instructions for real inter-human conflicts.

Hitler's seizure of power was a shock for Elias. It caused him to ask the following question: How can it be that the collective formation of conscience had undergone such radical damage that such spontaneous brutality against groups in a weak situation could be realised? What sort of process was it that had led to the fact that the brutality was accompanied by a guilty conscience? In earlier historical periods, populations had been annihilated, completely naturally, without the action being accompanied by a feeling of guilt, distaste.

He mentioned everyday incidents in England, for example in a railway carriage and one of the passengers wanted fresh air. An English person usually asked: «Does anyone mind if I open the window»? before he opened it. In Germany, Elias said, such behaviour would have been unthinkable; there the person would just have opened the window without asking, if he needed fresh air, without showing any consideration for the other passengers.

The questions Elias asked in this connection were: What is it that enables some people in a society to mix with

each other reasonably peacefully and others cannot? What are the processes that have led to these different forms of behaviour?

How did this change, this «civilising» of the West, actually happen? What did it consist of? And what were its causes or motive forces?

These were the motives and questions that led to Norbert Elias unique work: *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation. Soziogenetische und psychogenetische Untersuchungen Bd 1 Wandlungen des Verhaltens in den weltlichen Oberschichten des Abendlandes. Bd2 Wandlungen der Gesellschaft. Entwurf einer theorie der Zivilisation.*

It was also the republication by Suhrkamp of this youthful work in a pocket edition that had motivated Elias to again lecture in Frankfurt am Main. He wanted to be the one who presented the form of sociological orientation and theory for which he had paved the way with this work. As everyone knows, the book was first published in 1936, volume 1, and volume 2 in 1939. But it was not until the pocket edition was published that Elias was read by the broad public. The book had by and large lain fallow for 40 years. It did not fit in with the prevailing social traditions, and Elias process sociology was still misunderstood by many, because people made efforts to interpret it on the basis on their own political orientation, professional traditions or cognitive theoretical position. This was very clear in the discussions and controversies that accompanied Elias lectures. People were fascinated but did not rightly know what they should do with research that moved on that level of synthesis.

Elias enjoyed the sudden great interest in his works, but was also marked by the fact that it was so difficult to establish a proper connection between the sender and the recipient.

This was expressed in our conversations. «Now I am read by many, but still misunderstood». People focussed on the concepts and did not follow the new orientation that lay in the feeling for the long-term processes, and the view of coherence in the man-made reality, which he displayed. Or, people were so enthusiastic that they elevated figuration sociology to the paramount sociological model. Elias was not impressed by that either. This was obvious in utterances such as: Mr NN has asked me whether he should make a register for *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation*. I have answered him: no. You should rather make the most of your time and use it for your own work. Søren, you should also be clear that it is important to find your own theme, otherwise it will mean that my concepts will be made static. Concepts and categories are dynamic and changeable means of orientation, which must let themselves be moved by the empirical material in which they are based». Another problem that arose time and again was the postulate that Elias' draft for a civilisation theory was linear, evolutionary and oriented towards the future. His interpretation of *Über den prozeß der Zivilisation* was too positive about the development in the West and too little critical about the socially produced conflicts and deformations that characterised modern society.

Many read the edition from the end of the thirties as a civilisation theoretical standard work that had been written recently.

Elias' project from the thirties was addressed to the above mentioned motives and questions, and in his own self-understanding was a **draft** for a theory of civilisation. In this pioneering work, he used knowledge from widely different subject areas in his efforts to find answers to his questions. Everyone who knows Elias biography knows that he knew the classics and was familiar with the psychoanalytical, sociological, political economy, culture analytical and philosophical currents of the time. But he did not want to hypostatize Marx's, Freud's or others' concepts, but to use the accumulated knowledge that was available as the launching pad for his own observations.

Elias allowed himself to be led by the material he encountered when he wrote *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation* during his exile. He went his own way and used untraditional sources such as for example books about the upbringing and manners of young people, instructions on measures to control the behavioural codes that are accepted unthinkingly in every age; those which, under and behind language, govern our relations with ourselves and each other. They are addressed to the body, the intimate, the passions and our behaviour to others. The documentation is very detailed and is so precisely described that one can visualise it.

Changes in our behavioural patterns are not solely determined by ontogenesis, the individual socialisation at a given point in time, or a single-minded biological phylogenetic heredity. Because it transpires when Elias does psycho- and sociogenetic studies that stretch over a period of several hundred years, that the imprinting of each person's individualisation and formation of identity on both the I- and the we-level depends on the continuity in social development. People's mental and physical constitution, when they are regarded as a figuration of

interdependent individuals, is influenced by the various nations' state-formation processes.

I asked Elias why he had written about the state-formation processes in France and had not taken the example of Germany. He said that first, what had happened in Germany was at that time too close. He was emotionally involved in the current catastrophe to such an extent that he would be unable to create the necessary distance, which was essential in order to do an adequate study of the unsuccessful state-formation processes in Germany. Furthermore, Elias believed that the particular German development was so complex that he would be unable to cope with such an analysis. Just as Marx had decided to follow the development of capitalism in England because it there appeared in its purest form, he had chosen to study the state-formation processes in France. Here Elias could follow a continuous process from the 11th century until it culminated in *Die höfische Gesellschaft* in the period when Louis XIV reigned.

The book, *Die höfische Gesellschaft*, which was a revised version of his qualification dissertation which he had not defended, *Der höfische Mensch* from 1933, and the book, *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation*, were, according to Elias, the core, the most thoroughly prepared works in his authorship. They were what I should concentrate on. «But Søren, you must not forget to look at the sports sociological studies I have done with Eric Dunning. The work with sport is very important to get on the track of the concept of figuration. And don't forget the game models in *Was ist Soziologie*. It was a great effort for me to develop them, but they have not actually been observed and taken note of as a model for a dynamic process sociology».

When the Second World War broke out in 1939, Norbert Elias had been in exile for 6 years. He had paved the way for a sociological central theory, but had ended up in no man's land. These were the works of a relatively young researcher which, in different social circumstances, would have been the start of a promising career.

Between the main works and the mentioned writings, 30 years had passed. From 1933 to 1956 Elias was not employed as a university lecturer. When he fled to France in 1933, he wanted to be able to continue his career in a country where he knew the traditions and mastered the language, but it was impossible to gain a foothold. France was a closed country for German intellectuals.

In England, he had to start anew and learn the language in which he wrote in his last years when he lived in Amsterdam. He supported himself in England as a teacher at evening school at the University of London's department for adult education, and he practised - with his friends from Frankfurt, S. F. Foulkes and Ilse Seglow - as a group analyst until 1954 when he was employed as a lecturer at the university in Leicester.

Although Elias had lived in England since 1936, his main work was not translated into English until 1978, 42 years after his arrival.

With his works from the 1930s, Norbert Elias made a break with the stagnation of social philosophy. He has shown how, with the help of long-term studies, it is possible to link intertwining dynamics in the development of society with the development of personality structures. In this connection he drew up sociological models which on several levels are directed towards being able to follow and demonstrate how people are able to develop different societies without fundamental changes occurring in their biological potential. People, regardless of race, are interdependent on each other through various symbolising - desymbolising processes, also called developments in society. These can be followed all over the world from tribal groups to warrior societies, from aristocratic courtly society and right up to the modern national states.

Norbert Elias had broken a hole in the wall, but he stood alone. The strength and the conditions to continue his work together with others with large new empirically based projects were impossible.

He had started on a weary journey in his efforts to convince his surroundings of the necessity of developing knowledge that could be used as the means of orientation in the man-made reality. Because he did not give up and lived a long time, he lived to see this succeed.

In his unpublished notes in Deutsches Literaturarchiv concerning the research areas of sociology and the sociology of knowledge, Norbert Elias revolved about the question, What is sociology? He believed that when one asks the question: *What is sociology?*, it is the same as also asking: *What is the research area of sociology?*

According to Elias, the job of sociology is, with other forms of science, to make the as yet non-conceptual world, which everyone finds, more accessible to people's understanding. Like other scientific disciplines, sociology has the task of safeguarding the store of knowledge that people have gathered for cognition of the unknown world.

The various sciences also have the task of dividing this task between them. They are directed to research different regions in order to open up for new insight and understanding of what is not yet known and recognised.

So when one asks: *What is sociology?*, the principal thing is to discover what research area sociology deals with. Decide what the task is that is peculiar to it and which it should be able to accomplish. Its area is not static, cannot be fixed in immobility, because the research area of sociology is ourselves as humans.

Sociology is addressed to a field that people have not understood until comparatively recently as one open to scientific study, namely the societies that people form with each other.

Old sciences such as physics and biology have gathered a continual streams of knowledge which, in spite of their specialisation, they can communicate to each other, since they have a central theory. The power of coherence in the physical sciences means that the development in the special disciplines is fruitful as it can be traced back to a binding frame of reference, which is the basis for everyone. It is shared by Albert Einstein as well as Niels Bohr.

Sociology, which is a relatively autonomous research area, operates on a different level of explanation, where variations and changes are detected in people's understanding of the processes, which, in practice, they develop in relation to each other. There are no originator or eternal regularities. In sociology, questions are asked about changes, variations and changes in the course of time.

Sociology should get involved in life contexts where things are not just external but which form dynamic fields of tension - where the prevailing circumstances affect the people, their mental and physical constitution. The task is then to widen the field of view and develop a language that is suitable to describe occurrences that are open to discussion, but for all that can be traced back to a historic context.

This also applies to the awareness of the social function of sociology. Its problem area is difficult to determine and be absolutely clear about. But it is important that awareness of the individual elements is incorporated into larger patterns and contexts.

The false philosophical question is: How can a person as the subject of cognition gain valid or true knowledge from an object?. The cognitive process is a social process that runs through generations and the underlying condition is two fundamental changes in the philosophical scenario.

Instead of a single individual as the subject for cognition, there is a whole group of people, not just here and now, but over many generations. The subject for cognition does not remain unchanged when it gets more knowledge. «The subject» itself changes in keeping with the cognitive process. This is a central point in process-oriented sociology. The person is a process where the sensuous life contexts and practices are supported by matrices, more or less flexible action drafts, which are also rooted as social figures in the biological-physiological process.

That people change during the cognitive process must be detectable by the theoretical models that are used. Changes in situations and the course of the process must be involved in the work.

With his work, Norbert Elias regarded himself as a torch carrier, who has given on the torch to the coming generation of researchers. Here I will conclude by drawing attention to the fact that in Elias' Nachlass in Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach am Neckar, many clues have been left for those who want to go their own way in the work with social processes on several levels.

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